

FEMA'S BROKEN PROMISES

(Mr. AL GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, it has been more than 100 days since Hurricane Katrina devastated the gulf coast region, destroying more than 300,000 homes, taking more than 1,300 lives. FEMA promised help, yet, more than 100 days later, thousands of survivors are still living in tents and shelters. More than 100 days later, promised trailers have not arrived. More than 100 days later, a Federal judge has had to force FEMA to extend its deadline.

FEMA is now opting out of 12-month leases. What FEMA won't do, Congress can do. It is time for this Republican Congress to work with Democrats and enact legislation granting 1 year of housing assistance. It is imperative that this be done before we adjourn. Human suffering continues. I am willing to work with those to end this suffering.

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ALITO NOMINATION

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, as the confirmation process of Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito moves from the back burner to center stage in the coming days, we should not allow it to become politicized by the left.

President Bush has nominated a capable and qualified individual to sit on our highest Court. Judge Alito has more judicial experience than any Supreme Court nominee in the last 70 years. He has a reputation as an even-tempered, impartial, fair-minded judge who believes in judicial restraint. The Senate unanimously confirmed Judge Alito to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, as this debate heats up, people should not be fooled by the mischaracterizations and personal attacks that are sure to come from the liberal left wing. Judge Alito is qualified. He deserves an up-or-down vote in the Senate.

REPUBLICAN PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN IS CONFUSING

(Mr. HOLT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, after this week we will be adjourning, we are told, for about 6 weeks or more in order to accommodate the court schedule in Texas. There are, therefore, some things that we should get done this week.

Many of us opposed the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill because we thought it was a mess. At least we

want it to succeed as best it can for the seniors, but it is so confusing that not even the Bush administration is able to get out the proper information to the very seniors who must make a decision about which plan to choose.

Seniors want help with their ever-increasing prescription drug costs, but they have voiced frustration and confusion over the law that the Republicans passed.

The administration has distributed inaccurate and incomplete information, and Republicans want to penalize any senior who does not sign up for a prescription drug plan by May 15.

Congress should not leave town without giving the seniors at least an additional 6 months to help make a decision that they can live with, that can give them at least some help with their prescription drug costs.

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING METH PROVISIONS IN PATRIOT ACT

(Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, meth threatens lives, safety, and health at great cost to all of us. That is why the meth provisions included in the PATRIOT Act reauthorization are so important.

I am pleased this legislation contains several significant provisions I authored, including enhanced criminal penalties originally a part of the anti-meth SLAM Act I introduced with Representative DARLENE HOOLEY. This bill also contains a drug certification provision I authored to stop the flow of meth from Mexico.

I thank Chairmen SENENBRENNER and SOUDER for their extraordinary leadership in moving this bill to the floor. I urge its swift passage. Doing so will send a strong signal that Congress is serious about fighting the scourge of meth.

We must send a signal to the pushers of this poison that they are not welcome in our communities. We must send a signal to the law enforcement officers who wake up every morning to protect our families that we stand with them in the fight against drugs and will work to give them every tool they need to be successful.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this important bill.

OPEC AND ENERGY DEPARTMENT DELIVER MORE BAD NEWS

(Mrs. MALONEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, OPEC and the U.S. Energy Department delivered another blow to financially strained American consumers Monday when they announced that high energy prices are here to stay.

During a meeting in Kuwait, OPEC members said they may cut production

of oil, increasing prices here in the U.S. At the same time, U.S. Federal energy forecasters projected the current high gas prices will last until at least 2014. This news comes at a devastating time for millions of families currently struggling to pay mounting home heating costs.

The onset of bitterly cold winter weather in New York City and across this Nation means that many people will have to make difficult sacrifices to afford these added expenses; and yet, Republican leaders in this body recently passed legislation that provides billions of dollars in financial assistance to energy companies, while cutting vital funds from LIHEAP, the low-income home heating assistance program.

Mr. Speaker, this is unconscionable. We should be increasing the LIHEAP funding and assistance and spreading this to the needed families over this holiday season.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR IRAQI ELECTION

(Mr. BASS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, today I commend and congratulate the Iraqi people on the occasion of the election which is going to be held there tomorrow. This election represents not only the successful liberation of the Iraqi people from decades of tyranny and oppression but it also is a great leap forward in solidifying democratic institutions in Iraq.

Perhaps more than our Constitution, our flag or our national anthem, it is our elections that best display the enduring success of our American democracy. From the formation of political parties and ideologies to spirited debates on critical issues, it is the symbolic act of casting ballots that continues to make our democracy a beacon of freedom and prosperity to the global community.

The Iraqi people will now have the opportunity to comprehend what Americans have learned over two centuries, that nations are more stable and more peace loving when a multitude of voices share in its operation.

I am confident that democracy will continue to flourish as Iraqis make their opinions heard, rally in support of their visions, and experience for the first time the many liberties that Americans hold dear.

PATRIOT ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. MEEHAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, 4 years ago, in the wake of September 11, Congress passed the PATRIOT Act to provide law enforcement new tools to protect America from terrorism. The bill was a rushed response and passed in an urgent hour.

Fortunately, the bill included sunset provisions, allowing Congress to revisit the law, reflect on its implementation, and fix those parts of the law that have clearly become overreaching. Four years later, Congress has failed to seize the opportunity to do so.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the leadership's attempt to irresponsibly rush another flawed bill into law.

Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past. Let us instead strike the right balance between our national security and our constitutional rights.

At a time when so much of the world questions our commitment to our own values, I urge my colleagues to show the American people and the world that we will defend our country, but that we will do so in a way that protects those rights that make it worth defending.

OUR ECONOMIC EXPANSION CONTINUES

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, recent reports and statistics are showing that the American economy has rebounded from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and is back on its historic track of growth and productivity.

In November, 215,000 new jobs were created for a total of 4.4 million new jobs over the last 2½ years. Our economy grew at a solid 4.3 percent in the third quarter, and unemployment is at a low 5 percent rate. In addition, the productivity of American workers is at an impressive annual rate of 4.7 percent, the fastest pace in 2 years.

Mr. Speaker, this astounding economic growth has all taken effect ever since we passed, and the President signed, the jobs and growth bill into law in May of 2003.

However, we in Congress still have work to do. We must make these tax cuts permanent, cut wasteful spending, and create an environment so that key sectors of our economy, such as the telecommunications industry, can reach their full potential.

If we continue on this path, the ultimate winner will be the American people.

THE PATRIOT ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. LARSEN of Washington asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am here today to highlight the contents of H.R. 3889, the Combat Meth Epidemic Act, which has been included in the PATRIOT Act conference report. As a co-chair of the Meth Caucus, I worked with our caucus members to craft a comprehensive meth bill that would attack our Nation's meth problem on multiple fronts. While I would have preferred a straight up-or-down

vote on a stand-alone meth bill, these meth provisions do benefit our communities.

Meth has been attacking this country, starting on the west coast and moving steadily eastward. It devastates communities, affecting not just meth users, but families, neighborhoods, public health, the environment, and crime rates.

This conference report takes necessary steps to limit access to a key meth precursor, pseudoephedrine. Significantly, it will allow for an additional prison sentence for individuals convicted of cooking or selling meth where children reside. Children are too often the silent victims of this drug. So this will help protect them by authorizing grants to assist children who have been found in meth labs.

For the first time, Congress is passing comprehensive anti-meth legislation that gives our local law enforcement and communities the tools, resources, and standards to protect themselves against the scourge of meth.

THE BORDER PROTECTION, ANTI-TERRORISM, AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION CONTROL ACT

(Mr. BEAUPREZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BEAUPREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in support of H.R. 4437, the Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act, because I believe it is past time we took serious steps to secure our borders and the safety of this country.

Rest assured, this legislation is not perfect nor is it a silver bullet, but it is a good start in terms of shutting off the magnet that is drawing people into our country to work illegally. Specifically, this bill contains provisions to establish the mandatory use of an employee eligibility verification program, designed to help employers hire only those who are in this country legally.

I submit that I am just as pro-business as anyone else in this Chamber. As such, I believe the Federal Government has a duty to provide the business community with the tools necessary to abide by the rules and then we need to enforce them.

I believe the Border Protection Act takes us a big step in that direction.

FIX THE MEDICARE BENEFIT

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of seniors in my district showed up to five town hall meetings I hosted over the past month to explain the Medicare drug benefit.

For as much interest as my constituents demonstrated, they are just as confused and frustrated by the daunting task, as President Bush put it yesterday, of understanding and then

choosing a drug plan from the dozens of plans with different premiums, deductibles, copayments, and lists of covered drugs.

Through no fault of their own, seniors are already encountering delays in their applications. Consequently, many will not receive their drug cards until after the sign-up deadline.

But we should not be surprised by a benefit whose flawed design was the result of ideology prevailing over practicality.

It is up to us here and now to make sure seniors understand their benefit and receive, without further delay, the affordable, life-saving drugs they deserve.

The first step should be extending the deadline by at least 6 months. I urge my colleagues to support this simple measure.

Seniors should not be rushed or penalized as they make this very important decision.

IRAQ SOLIDARITY DAY

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, Iraqis tomorrow will vote and America will stand firmly behind them for this historic milestone. While we look into the future, it is instructive to look back just a few short years. Iraqis lived in fear. "Freedom of expression" were three words most Iraqis thought they would never experience, and a brutal dictator oppressed millions of people.

Now optimism and success are sweeping Iraq. Hundreds of candidates vying for 275 representative spots are a product of this success. In the span of a few short years, Iraq's economic sector is setting the stage for growth. Introducing a new currency, reopening their stock exchange, loans to encourage small businesses, and infrastructure improvements are just a start.

More Iraqi security forces are being trained every day; and today, over 210,000 have been trained and equipped. The election this week is the next important step that must be taken in order to allow our men and women to begin coming home, having accomplished a great deal.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow will be a historic day for Iraq, and all America will watch proudly as we witness freedom and democracy coming to reality before our eyes.

MEDICARE DRUG PLAN

(Mr. DEFAZIO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, the President breezed through a senior center yesterday, and he said, well, the Medicare drug plan seems perplexing, but he urged seniors to sign up anyway. It's a good deal, he said, of the program.

Well, it's a great deal for the pharmaceutical industry because it protects